MID-WAY TRACKS

By
JOHN
HORNE

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Starting Points.
Promptings to Devotion.

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The Burn of Tang.

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The County of Caithness (edited).
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The History of Kirkintilloch (edited).

LONDON: ELLIOT STOCK.

Diversions of an Autograph Hunter.

MID-WAY TRACKS

By JOHN HORNE

Published on behalf of the Fund for Blinded Soldiers.

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"Say, brother, do thy happy eyes behold
The miracles of sky and hill and shore?
Then, tell thy gratitude in gifts of gold,
To succour those who ne'er shall see them more."

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MID-WAY TRACKS

By
JOHN
HORNE

KIRKINTILLOCH: D. MACLEOD, LTD.
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"My son, sacrifice no time to the exploit of climbing after mountain-peaks: the footholds are risky and the way companionless. Nor do thou sulk among the boglands, as many of the purposeless and discouraged do. Give your concern to the mid-way tracks—where travellers like yourself are rife and the themes of conversation are those of common interest."—

Letters of an Arabian Merchant to his Son.

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MAN'S DIVINER MOOD.

Oh, there are times when all the tangling webs
Reel off the soul before some ballad mood;
When cark and pain lose thrust, and even love
And friendship dally in the sapphire clime;
When nought is known beyond the sentient soul,
All clean and naked of its coars'ning clews,
And *life* the only consciousness at work.
My God, how blythesome thus to live! To have
No being save in throngings of delight!
To feel the glory vault along the nerves
And sally to the heart's forlornest shade,
While Joy waits gaily on each ripe desire!
Ah, then I feel my kinship with Thyself,
And know that Thine own life is in me hid!

But there are times when all the pronged array
Of felon odds banks up against the soul;
When ev'ry outwork ranged by hardy faith
Is hacked, and strained are all the barricades
That fortify resolve against assault;

When all the trained resources of the mind
Are played, and ill and grief demand the throne.
My God, how glorious thus to live! To have
No proof of life but in the sense of fight!
To man the gates that yet withstand the crowd,
And still to hope when all the gates are down,
While Death waits grimly on each panting grace!
Ah, *then* I feel my kinship with Thyself,
And know that Thine own life is in me hid!

SCOTLAND MY HOME.

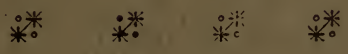
Grand are the bens of thee, crags of thee, rocks of thee,—
Bold are the shores of thee, harried with foam;
And it's oh, to be great for thee, small for thee, nought for thee,—
Only to live for thee, Scotland my Home!

Wild are the hills of thee, moors of thee, glens of thee,—
Brave are the deeds of thee, written in tome;
And it's oh, to be swift for thee, slow for thee, staid for thee,—
Only to slave for thee, Scotland my Home!

Dear are the hearths of thee, mounds of thee, graves of thee,—
Fair is each hall of thee, steeple and dome;
And it's oh, to be hot for thee, warm for thee, cool for thee—
Only to bear for thee, Scotland my Home!

Fain I remember thee, think of thee, dream of thee,—
Proud is my love of thee, nursed on thy loam;
And it's oh, but to live for thee, slave for thee, bear for thee,—
Ay, or to die for thee, Scotland my Home!

THE LITTLE SHIP IN THE WINDOW.



An aged cot upon a brae,
With straw-happed roof and walls of grey;
A window small
(Four panes in all)
Looks out across a busy bay.

Upon the sill, in dusty sails,
A little ship the view curtails;
Six inches long,
Her lines all wrong,
Her keel a run of rusty nails.

Once on a time the ship was new,
And dots of dough made up the crew;
The rigging, thread—
Each block, a bead—
And from her mast a streamer flew.

From off her bows an anchor swung—
By chain of worsted-thread it hung;
Of shining brass,
It well might pass
For polished gold from mountains wrung.

The little master of the craft
Admired his vessel fore and aft;
He named her "Hope"
That she might cope
With winds that o'er the wash-tub waft.

And oft and long the dreamy boy
Sat by the window near his toy;
And proud was he
Her sails to see—
But oh! that anchor was his joy!

And as he dreamt beside his ship
He saw the spanky vessels trip
Across the bay
To lands away
Behind the bound where sunsets dip.

The tides his fancies floated far,
To imaged scenes of peace or war;
They flecked his rest,
And woke his breast
To brave the world beyond the bar.

And so, one fairy, summer day,
When seas were calm and skies were gay,
His little ship,
With trembling lip
He fondly kissed; then sailed away.

As on the waning deck he stood,
He viewed his home in pensive mood;
With heart upraised
He prayed, and gazed
At where his weeping mother stood.

* * * *

Beside the little ship to-day
His mother sits and scans the bay,
And wonders where,
Beyond her care,
Wanders the boy who went astray.

The mocking years, the lonely fight,
Have scored her face and marred her sight;
But "Hope" is still
Upon the sill
And bravely swings her anchor bright!

SLIPPING TO SLEEP.

A wearied girlie dipt her fragile head
In the down cushions of her cradle bed;
To acts of worship fell her drowsy eyes,
And then I heard "Our Father" slowly rise.

Full deftly stole the blinding touch of sleep,
Yet, faintly brave, she strove the track to keep;
"Thy Kingdom come" scarce found a languid birth,
Then broken came, "Thy will—be—done—on earth."

"As," I suggested. "As," she late replied;
"It is," I gently urged. "It—is," she sighed;
"In Heaven." "In"——— But "Heaven" was
heard Elsewhere—
The wearied brain had slipped to sleep in prayer!

* * * * * *

Oh, youthful saint, soft-breathing in thy nest,
Thy happy fault hath taught me this request—
That when at last my eyes shut out the glare,
May my tired soul sleep off to "Heaven" in prayer!

TO THEE, ETERNAL SOUL!

(In War-Time).

Oh, Thou Eternal Soul Who quickens all—
Whose pulse creates the seraph and the fly—
Whose potent thought provokes the rise and fall
Of prancing suns and wavelets of a sigh;—
Remembrance Thou must have of all that fills
The kingdoms of Thy wide-creative care;
Thou know'st the triumphs, passion-warps and ills
That e'en the meanest of Thy creatures bear!

Quench, then, in tyrant minds the ghoulish greed
  To thieve for Self all honours, rule, and place,
And capture for its own lust-cradled need
  The liberties Thou gavest to the race;
Fling crown and crozier to the muddied pools,
  If these shall thwart the people's rightful sway;
For carrion food give kings and titled fools
  Who desecrate a globe for one high day!

Forbid that any truths which manhood crown
  Should find escape through mesh of mixing steel;
Or that the fruit from Paradise dropped down
  Should rot beneath a spurred, audacious heel!
And oh! let *us* not spill what our brave sires
  By courage won, and sacrifice ensured;
And make us worthy, when the fight expires,
  To stand erect as those who have endured!

ESCAPEMENT.

Beside my study window pane
  A rosy picture winks and calls;
It shows a far and smiling land
  With feathered shores and waterfalls.

When skies are threshed by raving storms,
  And streets are clogged with boiling rain,
I set my eyes to this retreat—
  And, lo! I'm off to sunny Spain!

No more the welt of frenzied gales—
  No more the gloom of prowling skies;
I live where soothing breezes purr,
  And all my world in sunshine lies!

* * * * * *

And when the weather of my soul
  Breaks loose in motions dark and cold,
I cast my thoughts to Heaven's clime—
  And, lo! I tread the streets of gold!

No more the doubt, no more the sigh—
  Dispelled my soul's depressed surmise;
For now I mix with griefless saints,
  And breathe the calm of Paradise!

AT LAST, LADDIE!

'Tis a joy to slip from the mooring rope
  And reach for the jubilant sea, laddie;
To freshen your sails in the winds of hope,
  And reel with a swish to the lea, laddie.
Oh, the ship is stout and shakes from her clews,
  And your heart's as firm as a rock, laddie;
And you have no care for the last slow cruise,
  When you'll lay-up stripped in the dock, laddie.
But
(And, oh to have faith when the masts are bare!)
  It comes at last—at last, laddie!

There are lordly gains for the worldling's dower,
And spoils for Society's slave, laddie;
There are honours of State for wealth and power,
And stars for the breast of the brave, laddie.
Oh, proud you will be when your fame is high,
And your name sounds big at the bank, laddie;
And you'll not believe that your flatt'rers lie,
Or that virtue is more than rank, laddie.
But
(And, oh to have faith when the lustre fades!)
It comes at last—at last, laddie!

The summer is rich at your cottage door,
And the birds spill joy in the sky, laddie;
There are singing waves on the beachy shore,
And the brave winds whoop from the hills, laddie!
Oh, pure is the bloom on the morning lawn,
And fresh are the flow'rs in your way, laddie!
And 'tis hard to think that the day can dawn
When your heart will lie in the clay, laddie!
But
(And, oh to have faith when the sun grows dim!)
It comes at last—at last, laddie!

THE HIGHLANDER IN LONDON.

I weary was in London—
The pangs of home were strong;
I wandered lone and brooding
Amid the southern throng;

Till late I caught a rapture
  Adown a coster street:
A vagrant played the bagpipes
  In rags and shoeless feet.

To me he came an angel
  With holy notes and high;
My heart forgot its loneness,
  My soul forsook its sigh.
Once more I saw the heather
  Around my father's cot:
The fog, the mob, the clamour,
  The streets, were all forgot!

"Play on, thou welcome piper!"
  (A coin dropt in his hand).
I scarce remarked his clothing,—
  'Twas worn in every strand.
His face was grimed and dirty,
  His hands seemed mud and glue;
But, oh, I thought him handsome,
  And dressed like Roderick Dhu!

"Again, again, kind piper!"—
  (Another coin had he).
The bag of glories rollicked
  In splendours running free.
I stood redeemed and flaming,—
  A revel in my brain;
The spirit of my fathers
  Was humming in the strain!

"Another tune, another!"—
(My hand again was out).
I closed my eyes and listened,
And heard the clansmen shout;
I saw them marching strongly,
With targe and blinking steel;
They charged the lurking foeman
With heart and hand and heel!

"Play up once more, rare piper!"
(He had my final coin).
Swam sight and brain and vision!—
Thrummed nerve and bone and loin!
Fled sorrow, care, and conflict!—
Ceased age and days and years!—
I knew of nought but transport,
And laughter laved in tears

TO YOU, CHUM! ○ ○ ○ ○

You can hear the mouldy wailers, in a voice of pious rust,
Sighing o'er our brief duration and its end of "Dust to dust;"
Hymn and prayer are born and cradled in this cold, consumptive wheeze,
And the Gladsome News of Heaven is delivered with a sneeze.

Even saints of higher makings, with a tougher set
of mind,
Waste a sinful time in pining for the days they've
left behind;
And they moralise like spendthrifts on the swiftness
of their years,
Saying, "What avails our striving? Life is vanity
and tears!"

There are women squandering half their days in
razzle-dazzle show,
And men at cards and races, who are finding life too
slow;
And yet these yawning loungers, who make "killing
time" a feat,
Yelp out that life goes in too quick and proves at
last a cheat!

Give these scorners o'er to Satan! Keep your feet
outside their gate!
Their atmosphere is fever, whether famed in Church
or State.
Set against the ills that jag you, bits of fun that
gild the day,
And keep an eye for pansies 'mid the nettles in your
way.

Duties seldom press our moments that our wisdom
cannot fit,
And every problem mastered stacks our life with
added grit;
The test of seasoned courage is to march without a
swerve,
And the glory of our manhood is to face our tasks
with nerve.

The hunt for truth has trophies for the eager, cleaving mind;
The cheery soul scents humours that the solemn never find;
There's a feast unguessed by dodgers in the joy of doing good;
And the man who works a kindness fills his heart with angels' food.

Life is long enough for duty; life is long enough to love;
There are years enough for glories ere we flit to bliss above;
There are satisfactions plentiful for him whose heart is right,
And never sets the sun for those who burn the inner light!

OMISSION.

If I have lived this day apart,
With schemes of work or feats of art,
And had not Thee in thought and heart,—
Forgive me, Lord of Good!

If I have lured my mind away
From duties stern to pleasures gay,
And sought the less heroic way,—
Forgive me, Lord of Right!

If I have changed my act or creed
To Fashion's craze or Custom's greed,
And Virtue left in grief to bleed,—
Forgive me, Lord of Truth!

If I have blurred another's light
By careless word or mood of slight,
And fouled their sunlight day with night,—
Forgive me, Lord of Grace!

If I have pushed aside a child,
Who gave its face to me and smiled,
Because my mind was hot and riled,—
Forgive me, Lord of Love!

If I have heard the trumpet call,
And saw my comrades fight and fall,
Yet cringed by hedge and shielding wall,—
Forgive me, Lord of Might!

OUT— AND BACK AGAIN.

Out to the ampler life—
To honour, success and fame!
To the taunting challenge of city strife
And the chance of a talked-of name!

Rude are the folks at home,
And rough are the hill-road tracks;
And sour is a drink at the burn in foam,—
And I'm weary of bleak peat-stacks.

Give me the daring breast,
  And the thrill of battling days!
I am sick to death of this straw-roofed nest,
  And the hamlet's ungainly ways!

Here's to the courting Fates!
  And here's to the joust and prize!
And here's to the signalling luck that waits!—
  Clear out! Be a climber, and rise!

* * * * * *

Back to the home-cut ways,
  To the lark and the wild-rose road;
To the blissful drink at the canty burn,
  And leisure to think of God!

Farewell the strident life!
  And good-bye to the warring quest;
Though we step out brave to the drum and pipe
  Our *heart* is in scenes of rest.

So leave me here at ease,
  In sight of the hill and the plain,
Where my soul is free to rove as it please,
  And I am a man again!

Here browse the winds of health,
  Here the stream tilts love to the star;
What a fool was I to exchange this wealth
  For a worried world afar!

HER WEDDING BONNET.

O, sample day! O, pattern hour!
When first my eyesight centred on it!
Sure, never was a shape so pat
As that neat, daisied wedding bonnet!

She scanned it with a bashful smile—
I asked her there and then to don it;
She perched it on her bonnie brow—
I kissed her, and her wedding bonnet!

A flirt of ribbon round the edge,
A crown of daisy stars upon it;
A nest of strings beneath the chin—
Oh, such a perty wedding bonnet!

From then till now—I count the years—
Life has been all a jolly sonnet;
For every joy the gods can give
Came to me with that wedding bonnet!

THE CROFTER AND HIS WORN-OUT PLOUGH.

Ay, ay, auld freend! Ye're there at last!
Yer day o' darg wi' me is past;
Yer puir, frail stilts are roostin' fast
In rain and dew;
An' noo aside a dyke ye're cast,
A useless clew.

Yer coulter's blunt and sairly worn;
Yer sock's as bent's a crumpled horn;
Yer sturdy sides are raxed and torn
Wi' life-lang strain;
But I can mind ye bricht's the morn,
Withoot a stain!

To think I'll never guide ye mair,
Ahint my weel-groomed, trusty pair,
Or dip yer snoot in furrows fair
To win me fame!
Ye're spent, auld freend; an' shaken sair
Thro' a' yer frame!

Yer work was unco dour an' ticht,
Yet aye it left ye scoor'd an bricht;
The mair ye strove, the cleaner sicht
Were yer auld sides.
God grant *my* wark may keep me richt,
An' clean besides!

I've watched ye rippin' through the sod
Wi' thochts that made me ask o' God
That I micht tak' as straucht a road
To Heav'n abune;
An' end my furrow neat and snod,
As ye've aye dune!

Guid-bye, auld freend! My manhood's pride!
Nae mair to usefu' wark ye'll glide!
Sune I mysel' maun drap aside,
An' share yer doom.
Content, I'll crumble by yer side
To dust and gloom!

THE PASSION OF THE PAST.

There are trackways over mountains
And foot-lines through the moss;
There are ragged trails in jungles
Where the frowsy grasses toss;—

But a roadway in my dreaming
Holds my contemplation fast;
It is thronged with pilgrim spectres
Who were comrades in the Past!

There are streamlets down the hill-side,
And rivers in the glen;
There are freshets in the forest
Wearing lanes in bosk and fen;—

But a runnel in my bosom
Speeds with more disturbing cast;
It is shallow now, and troubled,
And was copious in the Past!

There are suns that reign in splendour,
And moons in bridal grace;
There are stars of torrid fuel
Lamping unencompassed space;—

But a sun that sets within me
Drapes my soul with shadows vast;
And the pathos of its sinking
Is its brightness in the Past!

LORD, SEND AN AGE OF PITY!

Lord, send an Age of Pity!
We've had enough of Acts and Schemes and Politics and Creeds;
Enough of show-philanthropies that skip the people's needs!
The master shuns the workman and outwits him in the dark;
The workman thwarts the master and bedamns him for a shark.
One neighbour snares another in some trap of legal slight
And hawks him out of home and bank to magnify his spite.
The merchant cuts his rival out and chuckles when he "fails";
The politician mounts his tub and vilifies and rails.
The squealing wheels of Labour grind without the grace of oil,
And our social life is clotted by the spleen of party broil.
Lord, send an Age of Pity!

Lord, send an Age of Pity!
Repeal the lawless brutishness of craz'd, Christ-mocking War;
Unseam the frauds that stalk in silks and spread their nets afar;
Call back the wandered souls of men from subtile Pleasure's gains
To spend in nobler aim the hours won by the martyrs' pains.

Regift to all our race the spirit of the Nazarene
That spent itself for weak and poor and wept with the unclean;
Revive the art of charity that heals a brother's sin
And decorates the soul who strives and yet may fail to win.
Impatience plays the traitor to our courage for the right,
And Love lies coffin'd in despair, bereft of touch and sight.
Lord, send an Age of Pity!

Lord, send an Age of Pity!
We pray for honour, lettered art, for virtues stern and fine,
But chiefly this, kind God—in all our hearts the throb of Thine.
Give strength to pluck the tempted back, the young and weak defend,
The lonely saint to comfort and the aged sick befriend;
Less crazing after stars and robes, more wish to right the wrong,
A rev'rence for those humble souls who bleed and yet are strong;
An aim to nurse the ministries that make for truth and right,
And full resolve that poor and sad shall taste of life's delight.
Oh, then the world will sunward swing, it's griefs and tortures past;
And all mankind, bewildered oft and foiled, reach Peace at last!
Lord, send an Age of Pity!

DON'T BE SNUFFY!

This hustling world is crowded pretty tight
With chums and strangers scrambling for their right;
If one should chance to dunch you in the fight—
Don't be snuffy!

The fancy fire-iron, haughty as a Turk,
Leans by the grate without a smutch or lurk;
But, mind, the common poker does the work—
Don't be snuffy!

The other chap may know as much as you,
Although the wind his jacket whistles through,
And guineas clinking in his purse are few—
Don't be snuffy!

He sports a bike, and you a motor car;
His smoke is bogie roll; and your's cigar;
But he may be a better man by far—
Don't be snuffy!

You travel first, while he a third must share,
Yet first and third get both together there;
And when the bridge goes down, alike you fare—
Don't be snuffy!

REMEMBRANCE: A TRUST.

"Give all your strength to duty, work, and life—
To-day has stronger claims than Yesterday."

Yes, friend, I know! Your arguments are sane;
Your motive, too, is red with friendship's fire.
I own your plea; and yet—and yet—I feel
That duty's core is memory of the dead;
And life were limp did I not oft commune
With those who cradled me in lowly love.

"But pleasure—what of it?"

Ay, pleasure, too:
For never did that jaunty angel Joy
Create delight that equals this by half—
To swoon in reverie becalmed, and dream
Of earth-fond faces sundered from my sight,
Of fragrant and romantic hours of mirth
When life was novel in my childhood's home,
Ere yet the world grew stern and life was tough.

"You cannot bring them back: why should you brood?
The Past is dead; the Present claims your powers."

Yes, yes, I know! I weigh your sage advice
Anent my musing on the changed estate
Of those who once beside me lived and laughed.
But, hear me out—Though never law of Life
Or duty of To-day would I despise,
Yet more ennobling are the sacred dues

Which I with joy begot of quenchless tears,
Repay my kin now speechless in the dust;
And, sure, the gifts of Life can ne'er outbid
Those soft entrancements which unthinking Death,
Outwitted by the gracious heart of God,
Has stored within the calm that soothes the dead!

"HOLY COMMUNION."

I know a temple builded not with hands
That fades, decays, yet ever forms anew;
'Twas reared by Him who beautifies all lands
And sprays the sunrise shimmer o'er the dew.

Its ample dome, wide-gilt with cluster'd suns,
Includes all churches, worshippers, and creeds;
Its holy laws are writ for him who runs
On solemn skies, and hills, and homely meads.

On ev'ry moor and plain the table's spread—
And lavish stores invite the feet to turn;
In fields of corn abounds the holy bread—
The wine is flowing in each mountain burn.

The hymns are warbled by enraptured choirs
Of lark and linnet, songsters of the light;
The celebrant is One who all inspires,
Whose altar robes are clouds of purest white.

Oh, blest communion under open skies!
Oh, feast for all, outspread on vale and green!
Oh, fellowship of universal ties—
Here meet I God without a form between!

MY GIRL.

All poets, when they dip in love,
Sing bravely of their lady's eyes—
Their "liquid depth" and "pearly blue"
And "languid flame of sweet surprise."

Or maybe 'tis the form they praise—
So "chaste" and "vivid in each line";
And, then, the limbs are "so superb,"
And lips and cheeks are "just divine."

I, too, will sing my lover's charms
And brag of them to sun and moon;
I'll start, and end, and start again,
And finish in a singing swoon.

I rave about her shining hair,
Her tender lips and sunset eyes;
There never were such lovely cheeks
Outside the walls of Paradise.

She has no youth, this love of mine;
Her limbs are shrunk, her step is slow;
Her saintly hands are nervous now—
Her voice is broken, spent, and low.

Oh, how I love her, gayest chum!
I wouldn't swap her for another;
She's quite the fondest, truest girl—
My frail, undaunted, widow'd mother!

LAY HIM DOWN.

(*A Coronach*).

Lay him down, softly down!
Where the bloom of heather clings,
Where the burn its matin sings,
Where the lapwings toss and cry,
Where the mavis thrills the sky—
Lay him down, softly down!
In the soil that gave him breath,
In the soil he loved till death,
In the homeland of his heart, lay him softly,
softly down!

Lay him down, softly down!
Now the sun has left the hill,
Now the throb of toil is still,
Now the curlew seeks the glen,
Now the sheep are in the pen—
Lay him down, softly down!
In the soil that gave him breath,
In the soil he loved till death,
In the homeland of his heart, lay him softly,
softly down!

Lay him down, softly down!
Till the sun forgets to rise,
Till the stars renounce the skies,
Till the waves desert the strand,
Till the streams forsake the land—
Lay him softly, softly down!
In the soil that gave him breath,
In the soil he loved till death,
In the homeland of his heart, lay him softly,
softly down!

MY CITIES OF SPLENDOUR.

I have lived in regal cities that my eyes have never seen;
I have strayed in glossy woodlands cast in gusts of chiffon green;
Coral skies have grouped above me such as never yet have shone;
And I've prayed in crowded temples where I worshipped all alone!

All my cities melt or fashion at the transit of a mood,
And they flit from busy sea-ways to the silence of a wood;
Never noise molests their thoroughfares nor cloud pollutes their day,
And I walk their dustless highways though they're ever far away.

Some of drifting dreams are builded, some of mirage visions' trance,—
Hope is architect of many; and, of many more, Romance;
All the braes are drowsed in sun-sheen, all the plains with roses blow,
And the river runes are chanting where the whitest lillies grow!

These my cities rise in latitudes of uncreated calm,
Where the soul is laved in music softer than a dream-land psalm;
Hill and crag are rouged in purple, tree and fern in lustre swing;
There is silence over dome and tower, yet all the belfries ring!

In my cities of illusion, blazing fair in Fancy Land,
My soul attains its birthright in a clime where ill is banned;
They are brighter than the morning with the sunshed on its brow,
And although I've never seen them, I am living in them now!

EARTH'S BEST.

If that the angels in the skies
Should yearn the bliss of earth to know,
And they a brother should appoint
To view the fairest sights below;

And if that angel, winging hence,
Should seek that I his guide might be,
I know how I would meet his quest—
I'd bring him straight, my love, to thee!

I'd show him first thy vestal eyes,
With woman's love divinely bright;
And then—— Why, then, I'd ask that he
Might view again their empress light!

And then—— E'en yet again I'd ask
That he should scan these glories two;
For there resides earth's fairest sight,
And there its purest rapture, too!

WHAT IS IT?

'Tis but a darkened, mindless seed—
Yet, cradled in a nimble soil,
It flutters forth a feathered stem
On which the tints of Eve uncoil!
What is it that translates its gloom
To green attire and idyll bloom?

'Tis but a sum of mould and clay—
Yet, in a figure sanctified,
It smiles a lady limbed in grace,
With love and beauty vivified!
What is it that incarnates dust
And makes it feel, and pray, and trust?

'Tis but a drear and frosted world—
  Yet, from the winter's landscape stern,
A life exudes of chaliced brooks
  And mossied plash of heath and fern!
    What is it that ignites the clay
    To flame in robes of colours gay?

* * * * * *

Oh, charmed seed! Oh, cultur'd dust!
  Oh, miracle of sentient sod!
Wake, wake, my soul! Look close and see
  The varied earth ***suffused with God!***

THE PASSING AND THE PERMANENT.

(***Told in the Night-Time***).

Swings the babe in his cradle bed
  (See how the stars are shining!)
Marv'lling looks, and thoughts dream-led—
  (See how the stars are shining!)

Shouts the boy up the winding way—
  (See how the stars are shining!)
Books, and slate, and spirits gay—
  (See how the stars are shining!)

Strides the man by the plunging plough—
(See how the stars are shining!)
Ardent aim, and earnest brow—
(See how the stars are shining!)

Nods the sire at the cottage door—
(See how the stars are shining!)
Shrinking frame, and eye-brows hoar—
(See how the stars are shining!)

Rests the corpse in the hugging mould—
(See how the stars are shining!)
Birth, and youth, and age are told—
(See how the stars are shining!)

THE DAY'S NEED.

Kind God, review my daily life,
And all its soiling blots efface;
Fill up the lapse of faulty acts,
And to my efforts add Thy grace.

Thou know'st the cast of human days—
How captious irritations rise;
How urgent duties flock the soul,
And call for constant sacrifice;

How subtile chances hint the way
To tempting profits scarcely clean;
How plans that seem secure and good
Are sapped by currents unforseen.

My wisest thoughts are oft in vain,
  My best intentions miss the way;
Revise Thou, then, what I resolve,
  And hinder me when I would stray!

Help me with just and steady mind,
  To sift the ill, the good to see;
To train my soul in righteous acts,
  And humbly leave the rest with Thee!

THE EVER-PRESENT TOMMY.

(*In War-Time*)

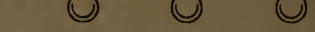
I am twisting at my ledger with its columns and its lines,
  But the shape of every figure blurs and runs,
For I'm seeing marching columns and the lines of fighting men,
  And the plucky Tommy sweating at the guns.

When I'm travelling in a corridor across our guarded land,
  And I chat with those who chum me in the car,
I am thinking it's an hospital where wounded Tommy lies,
  Cut and torn with hostile shrapnel at the war.

If I sit me down to worship in the kirk on Sabbath
morn,
I can hear the parson shouting for more light,
Yet it's Tommy on the battlefield who's speaking all
the while,
As he calls in eager snatches through the fight.

Though I dine with friend and neighbour, read the
books of latest thrill,
Try to ease my mind with interest in a game,
Yet I keep on thinking, thinking, of the reddened
fields of strife,
And the gallant Tommy facing shot and flame!

THE AWFULLY-REVEREND TIMOTHY DREAR.



["My friends," he cried, "when the godly Dr. Kennedy of Dingwall was alive he said you could cover all the true Christians in the north with a blanket; but I'm telling you that you could cover them all to-day with a hankie!"]

The Awfully-Reverend Timothy Drear
Was a ponderous, flounder-faced pulpiteer,
Who housed the daft notion somewhere in his head,
That whatever ***he*** taught, whatever he said,
Was the authorised truth of the Lord on high,
And not to assent was God's Word to defy.

He reckoned that mankind was all in a mix—
The Devil was boss, with the Lord in a fix;
He credited Nick with a masterful power
That battered the forces of good every hour,
But his faith in the Truth was woefully slight
Though paid a snug stipend for teaching its might.

The vain world was tumbling to hell with a lurch
Because the crowd didn't surge into Tim's church;
He railed at the young folk because they would dance—
What youngsters are made for, by some happy chance;
He huffed at the staid folk because they were cold
To clamorous homilies musty and old.

Tim sorrowed that nobody gave the least heed
To sweaty appeals for the Church in her need,
Or frenzied alarms, in a pulpity whine,
On sins of the age and religious decline;
But always he cuddled himself with the view
That whoe'er was false, *he* was faithful and true.

New preachers were traitors to God and His Truth,
Who spread a false Gospel and blinded the youth;
The spirit of Pleasure had blighted the race
And killed clean away every sign of God's grace;
Yes, even the summer and sunshine were sad
For man was so godless and totally bad.

Death finally urged him to give up his post
And quit from a world so regardless and lost;
No tombstone as yet marks his silence and rest,
But when it is ordered, two lines I suggest:—

He thought that this world was a "valley of woe"
And faithfully laboured in making it so.

NEW YEAR'S DAY.

I.—Morning.

Tumult of storm on the hill to-day,
Clamour of surge on the sea;
Flotsam and spume on the vaporous beach,
Galloping winds on the lea!
Noble moods in my blood to-day,
Challenging every wave;
Knightly emotions that answer the blast,—
Passions that nurture the brave.

II.—Afternoon.

Triumphing sun on the ridge to-day,
Drizzle of gold on the sky;
Pathway of blue to Eternity's fields,
Realms where the cherubims fly!
Heav'nward hopes in my soul to-day,
Visions and vistas grand;
Cleansing devotions that beat for the skies,—
Throbs of the Purified Land.

III.—Evening.

Children a-wrap in their cots to-night,
Blackbirds at home in their hedge;
Cattle at rest in their odorous stalls,
Sea-gulls in peace on their ledge.
Cloister thoughts in my heart to-night,
Careless of storm or calm;
Mellow sensations that vanquish unrest,—
Harmonies cradled in balm.

IV.—Midnight.

Shipwrecks a-soak in their crypts to-night,
Castles in lonesome decay;
Warriors idle in moistening tombs,
Common folks cold in the clay.
Spasms of pain at my breast to-night—
Sorrow for those I miss;
Gallantry, beauty, endeavour, defeat,
And opulence—end in this!

THE NOR'-EASTER.

(*A Caprice in words—for recitation.*)

Laughing at first in a frolicsome way,
The Nor'-Easter pranced in the mouth of the bay:
And
Smirking and quirking,
It capered and flounced
And sallied and bounced,
And made up its mind for a lively display.

It raced up the bay to all sorts of craft,
And cuffed them to leeward and heeled them abaft,
And washed them and clashed them and thrashed them,
And lashed them and hashed them and bashed them,
And bellowed around them as if it were daft;

Then,
With a shriek
In its beak
And a fling
In its wing,
It danced up the quay
In an angersome way;
It pounced on the scavenger's waterproof coat
(Which hung on the stern of an old cobble boat),
And
Coaxed it,
And hoaxed it,
Then boxed it along like a mad billy-goat—
Laughing "Ho! ho!" and "He! he!" and "Ha! ha!"
With the laughter of mischievous imps in its throat!

Next, spying some houses and workshops at hand,
It whistled a hornpipe and went for them grand.
With a skip
And a rip,
It took in its grip
Cans, slates, tiles, and whatever would slip,
And it jerked them aloft like a juggler insane,
And banged them and twanged them in highway and lane;
Then bluffed itself pack against chimney and stack,
And left them bewildered, unsteady and slack,
And giggled to think of the run
Of fun
It was having this trip!

It then took a spill
At a shaky meal mill,
And trounced-in the door with the thud of a hill;
And it tore
Through the door
With a snore and a roar
That flustered the miller as never before!
It frightened his kids,
And rattled his lids;
And it scattered his sids,
And "Hooched!" as they thickened in crazy galore,
And blinded the miller,—
Who swore,
And sweat at each pore,
And fought for the door,
And spluttered his wrath from rafter to floor!

It reeled on its way to Meadowland farm;
And kicked up a ravishing row and alarm:
It birled,
Whirled,
Twirled,
As if it were bent on nothing but harm;
Hens, ducks, peats and hay
Mixed in the sky and clouded the day,
And voted that things were uncommonly warm;
The tenant stood,—
And his mood
Wasn't good,
For he thought,
That
All the black imps had come out on the swarm!

Next it found,
Ploughing the ground,
Willie the crofter, with whiskers profound;
So,
It blew them apart like streamers of smoke
And tied them behind him in blasphemous joke,
And jeered when he broke
Into language that spoke
Of the oven where brimstone and sulphur abound!

Then it whistled to Sutherland's market-day hat,
And the hat
That
Sat
On Sutherland's head
Like a vessel of lead,
Went flying,
Skying,
As if it were dying
To irritate Sutherland out of his wits;
For it swooped up the steeple and stuck on the vane,—
Then flapped to the roof of the sanctified fane,—
Then bumped to the ground,
And galloped around,
And finally sprung through Aunt Marion's pane
As if it had taken the fits!

When Marion howled and sped to the door
It parcelled her up in a clew on the floor;
It kittled the band-boxes down from the shelf
And jokily muddled them up with the delf;

It tickled her bonnets and caps off the nails
And jauntily dropped them in Marion's pails,—
Then,
In a whiz
And a biz,
It came out with a shout,
And made off
With a scoff
To see what the rest of the world was about!

A PRESCRIPTION: "TO BE TAKEN DAILY."

I.

Why bleat of winter while the roses bloom,
Or barter sunshine for the dread of gloom?

Life's stunning hour is here! Why sigh of age
Amid the nurtures of its gallant rage?

Why brood on Silence while the song is sung,
Or miss the music from the harpers flung?

Ape not the gloomy priest, in mournings furled:
God gives you passport through a radiant world!

II.

Would you the welcome dinner gong disdain
Because your appetite will come again?

Will you refuse the grace of sleep to-night,
For this—that waking back returns with light?

Why light your fire, if dark so soon succeed?
Or help a neighbour in a passing need?

III.

"My youth has fled: the best has passed away."
Nay: sunset splendours crown the ripened day.

"I miss the early faces." Rather say—
The stars, unseen, are shining through the day.

"My home must sink a pile of stones and earth."
But why not meanwhile warm you at its hearth?

"Yet Night is sure." As sure as Day has come;
But, then, we'll have the Lamp to light us Home!

THE SECRET OF IT.

The swath of a cloud in emerald skies,
  Calm-stayed as in timeless ease;
The sail of a ship, like a dove-white dream,
  Reposing on far-off seas;
The wink of a laugh in the children's eyes,
  Undreaming of cares to come;
The scent in your room of a wayside flower,
  Recalling the scenes of home;
The spurt of a sudden emotion pure,
  Upgushing in street or mart—
These are the simple and fadeless joys
  That succour the happy heart!

FUNNY—ISN'T IT?

Some are daft and others wise;
Some speak truth and others lies;
Some are friends and others spies.
Funny—isn't it?

Some hoard up and others spill;
Some live well and others ill;
Some would heal and others kill.
Funny—isn't it?

Some are sly and others true;
Some look bright and others blue;
Some rejoice and others rue.
Funny—isn't it?

Some are sweet and others sour;
Some stand up and others cower;
Some pass on and others glower.
Funny—isn't it?

Some are mild and others rough;
Some are weak and others tough;
Some are—(but you've had enough!)
Funny—isn't it?

Only one is quite correct—
Him you always do respect.
"Who's he?" Only just reflect!
Funny—isn't it?

THE VOICES.

I.

Bonnie boy, bonnie boy, wading by the bar,
Think you of the ranging sea calling you afar?
Hear you what the waters say,
Roaming round the bay?

"Come and see the sunny lands
Where your dreams disport;
Home-tied boys are silly boys,
Losing all the sport!"

Bonnie boy, bonnie boy, see the burnies run
Through the fields and ferny tracks, singing in the sun!
Know you what the burnies say,
Dancing to the bay?

"Quiet ways are happy ways,
Undisturbed by strife;
They who choose the quest of peace
Find the joy of life!"

II.

Bonnie boy, bonnie boy, dreaming by the strand,
Watch the schooners sail away at the wind's command!
Know you what the schooners say,
Sweeping down the bay?

"Let the loungers hug the shore,
And the idle sleep;

Life is meant for toil and risk—
Follow to the deep!"

Bonnie boy, bonnie boy, see the little boats,
Coasting on the quiet tides where the sunlight floats!
Know you what the boaties say,
Cruising in the bay?

"Straying hearts are ill at ease,
Storms have they who roam;
Calm is found in cosy creeks—
Keep your heart at home!"

"IF WE MEET"——

(Mark Twain's Last Words.)

"If we meet"——How many earnest, tortur'd minds
Have left the sentence incomplete!
Uncertain to proceed, yet on the way—
And then the clutch of doubt has throttled faith.

Ay, "*if* we meet"——There's the soul-racking crux!
How pants philosophy upon the phrase,
And mind and soul are spent to read it clear!—
The mystic fact eludes the huntsman's craft,
And shyly leaps the trap by Reason laid.

Alas, that any soul should still sigh "If!"—
That no unquestion'd voice has pinned the mind
Of man clean down, and call'd it to a stand!—

That never holy saint, nor script inspir'd,
Nor hot evangel hath erased it quite!—
That no mail'd Great-Heart has outstormed the doubt
And planted fast faith's flagstaff pointing up!

* * * * * *

But "If we meet"—*There* beats the pulse of hope!—
And wistful saints ask, "If we meet—what then?"
Oh, then, what wid'ning rings of ecstacies,
What unimagined excell'ncies of thought!
What thrilling parchments of illumined joys,
And Odysseys of exploration far!
What seas shall tide us to broad continents,
And float us to ripe foodlands and celestial hills!
What mellow'd suns, ripen'd in orient skies,
Shall hatch their magic in the fields of peace!
With what accented relish shall we kneel
At wells of knowledge, unconceal'd and pure!
And oh, with what ascending glee shall we
Escape the crusted years of Earth's entail,
And strut in full eternities of joy
With those familiar to our soul's delight!

And all unclouded! Never jag of grief,
Nor pang, nor sigh, nor falcon dread again;
Nor dying light in once-benignant eyes,
Nor lonely tears beside a voiceless grave!
No joy proscribed by colophon or end,
But flinging gleam to further gleam alway!
Sure such a climax-touch becomes a God
Who spends a million sunsets every night,
And drops no shell unburnish'd from His hand;

Whose glance creates a universe of stars
To light the lapwing to his earthy nest;
Who, tiring not, completes what He designs,
And perfects all in His own royal way!

A SAINTLY WORDLING.

I care not what the preachers say,
To me, "the world" is jolly fine;
I chum with fellows grave and gay,
And like a turn of shade and shine.

These eyes can never see enough
Of funny scenes and pleasant things;
When Nature sends me smooth or rough
I thank her for the joy she brings.

A tale of mirth, I must confess,
Is evermore a means of grace;
I love all jokers (more or less!)
Whose stories rax my solemn face.

I can't resist a witty fib,
If told with art and catching glee;
Whatever scarts my funny rib
Goes fairly roaming over me!

Commend me to a laughing dream
As I cast off to Slumber Shore;
And when I wake—bring out the cream,
The teapot, and the eggs once more!

Sure, I must be a giddy spark!
I'm always open for a joke;
And now and then (but keep it dark!)
I can revere a quiet smoke.

I don't refuse, in season apt,
A wholesome comic song to sing;
And sometimes, when my blood is tapped,
I ease me with the Highland fling!

I really think some "worldly" ways
Are healthy, innocent, and good;
Without them, dull would be my days,
And my religion smell of wood.

P.S.—

I fear I must amend my life,
And keep such worldly moods at bay;—
But first, I'll need to sound the wife;
And then—I know what *she* will say!

HI, COMRADE!

What is the aim of this life of ours, toiling comrade of mine?
Is it to run your ship into shoals, give up the wheel, and repine?
Is it mainly to brood and fret, as if to exist were wrong
And God had forgotten his purpose to mix our clay with a song?

Is it to croak and rue, with a soul full of nettles and weeds,
To hammer a day's work out in a petulant spirit that bleeds?
To starve the entrails of life and leave it a skeleton dry,
Then fling it aside to the scrap-heap with not a tear in the eye?

Hark, comrade of mine! The Lord is a Sun, and His world is bright,
He made us the children of day and not the prowlers of night;
The juice of true living is joy, to gladden us in our toil,
And the soul that forgets it tires of its task and loses the spoil.

"Ah, yes; but the Devil's at work! He's still at large in the world;
And evil and vice are alert with their talons and fangs unfurled;
And the brain is jammed and gored with problems that stagger and scare;
There's not a clear hour to laugh in without an invasion of care!"

Well, what of the Devil and sin, and evil, and all the fry?
Why should you wince for the bundle of them, when God is always by?

Is the Devil as God for strength, or wickedness more
than grace?
To own that Satan is match for God, to me would
be a disgrace!

Hark, comrade, again! Why need you sin? Why
should you thieve and lie?
There's no compulsion to evil, if you'll give it the
smart go-by;
You can surely be straight and clean, with a soul too
sound for scabs—
And if you are that, you are safe! It's the sneaks
that the Devil nabs!

Pay scant response to the priestlings,—who splutter,
and smother the fun;
Cram changing creeds in the boiler fire, and face the
unchanging sun;
Theology wearies the brain and vexes the cheery soul—
Go out to the hovering sky and the fields if you
would be whole!

The sunbeams laugh on the hills and the wavelets
hum on the sand;
And the flowers throw scented kisses to the breeze
that freshens the land;
The drab earth blushes to beauty, and the trees and
brackens swing.—
And you are the only songster mute! Wake! Sum-
mon your soul, and sing!

God means us to sing at our tasks, and do just the
best we can—
To labour in honest intent, and play out the game
like a man;
Give ease to your "problems," comrade: look in the
eyes of a child:
Follow your heart in its primitive glee, simple and
undefiled!

Dust you again from the ashes! Off with the sack-
cloth and hood!
Harden your soul to the steadying truth that all things
work for good!
You have worried and pined, and—failed; you took,
but forgot to give;
And you've missed the fun and the sunshine! Up,
now, and begin to *live!*

UNION OF THE DIVINE AND COMMON.

A thorn-bush shrank in cow'ring negligence
Beside a gusty roadway, dashed and spent.
"What use is there of me?" it sighed and mourned.
"Lilies there are, and roses rare, and ferns,
With coloured grace and beauty to allure
The eye and hand of love; to dew the air
Of palace, shrine, and lowly cot. But I——
Who wastes a favoured glance on *me?* What hand

But plucks itself aside in peevish fear
Lest I should only pain and hurt entail!"

Just then—as dawn unshuttered wide the day—
A booted soldier clattered down the road,
And, spying this rude thorn, cried, "This I'll take!
'Twill write the Galilean's brow with blood!"
With shearing sword he swept a branchlet off
And twined it to the circlet of a crown:
Then, snatching back his steps, he entered straight
A hall where One, all-patient, unsubdued,
Outstood the rasp of Roman hate and scoff
With frank forgiveness and untiring love.

A ribald shout from throated scorn and mock
Proclaimed the welcome of the soldier's find;
And then, with zest insane, the yielding thorn
Was chased about His pure, translucent brow
And deck'd the hair of Heaven's elected Son!

And thus the common thing, by strange design,
Was elevated to divine renown,—
And shares the glory of the King of Kings!

ON THE WINGS OF THE SKYLARK.

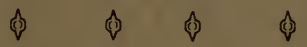
Sing to me, blythesome skylark, full and sweet,
While here I stay to watch thy seraph flight;
Sound all thy reeds and woo my sluggish thought
To mount with thee to villas of delight!

My heart is drowsy with the hum of crowds,—
  I cannot flee the echoes of the throng;
Oh, skylark, skylark, wrap me in thy joy
  And waft me blissful on thy happy song!

Thy wings are mine, pure chemist of the air—
  By them I rise to healings chaste and free.
I sing in thee! Thy flowing voice is mine!
  I triumph in thy lilt of careless glee!

Oh, elevation calm! Oh, realm of peace!
  Oh, revel of the sky, without a sting!
Stay there, my soul! Thou'rt nearer God and heaven
  When lifted sunward on the skylark's wing!

THE HOMEWARD ROAD.



The race strides on in its swinging march,
  And pants for the Perfect Day;
The cohort lights of that spangled dawn
  On my eager helmet play—

Yet
Oh for the homeward road to-night!
  And oh for my father's door!
I would to God I were still a child
  On the breast that is warm no more!

I spur my faith to each challenge new—
A soldier of Hope am I;
No fear of the Future's mellow good
Bedarkens my spirit's sky—
Yet
Oh for the homeward road to-night!
And oh for my father's door!
And I would to God I could turn me back
To the hearth that is bright no more!

Come rough or smooth, I am shod for all—
I laugh at the taunts of Death;
No note but joy shall entrap my soul
Or capture my dying breath—
Yet
Oh for the homeward road to-night!
And oh for my father's door!
And I would to God I could weep in grief
With the eyes that are wet no more!

THE LADS WHO WILL MARCH TO THE PIPES NO MORE.

(In War Time.)

The dawnlight jokes with the morning hills,
And filters the gloom from the sleepy rills;
And the sun's bright smile flits mile on mile
To moor and glen and dark defile;—
But the heart of the Land is sore, is sore,
For the lads who will march to the pipes no more!

The Empire broadens its noble sway,
And fashions its sons for the future day;
And its flag flies wide, in freedom's pride,
O'er peak and scarp and sounding tide;—
But the heart of the Land is sore, is sore,
For the lads who will march to the pipes no more!

The dewfall crystals the field and lawn,
And glitters as clear as the first bright dawn;
And the skylarks sing, on festal wing,
To boy and knight and jewelled king;—
But the heart of the Land is sore, is sore,
For the lads who will march to the pipes no more!

The furnace throbs and the hammers pelt,
And labour is hot in its urgent welt;
And children play, in their care-light way,
By path and stream and woodland gay;—
But the heart of the Land is sore, is sore,
For the lads who will march to the pipes no more!

A PRAYER.

Whatever else Thy mercy lends
To fringe with joy my common days;
Whatever else Thy grace imparts
To keep my feet in pleasant ways;—

Give, Lord, a hope for humankind;
A dauntless faith beyond decline;
And grant a clean and pliant will
To coincide and work with Thine!

May selfish aim and wish unfair
Secure no sanction in my breast;
Let charity my mind dispose,
And in my heart may candour nest!

Beat harmonies from sad events;
Flash brightness through dejected thought;
The voice that pines, tune Thou to song;
And speed whate'er my faith has wrought!

LEAVE ME HERE TO-DAY.

(A Mood in the Churchyard.)

Leave me here to-day!
No heart have I for the climbing road
With its vista-track to the sun's abode;
Too rude and blunt is the ocean's roar
On the jaggy sprawl of its tortur'd shore;
Nor mood is mine for the hills afar,
For the lavish moor or gallant scar;
The fields are wide, and the lanes are long,
And my soul is shy of the fussy throng.—
Leave me here to-day!

Leave me here to-day!
No need have I for the world's big things,
And faint is the clamour of courts and kings;
I rest by a grave of lonely grass,
Where only the wings of the angels pass;
Mine eyes are closed, that I clearer see
The faces no longer of earth for me;
A boy once more, to our hearth I come,
And parent and child are again at home!—
Leave me here to-day!

Leave me here to-day!
My soul is lapped in a holy mood,
And to dream, and dream, is its truest food;
The charm of life is to think of death,
And the sweetest laugh is a praying breath.
Oh, nothing seems great, or grand, or true,
That springs not here from the sod and dew!
And the sunniest thought is a wish to die,
And calm in the grass with my kin to lie!—
Leave me here to-day!

/

"ALL SERVICE RANKS THE SAME WITH GOD:
THERE IS NO LAST NOR FIRST."

—Browning.

A yokel builds a cow-shed, and a baron rears a tower—
And both his end completes with honest bent;

A year or two of service and the shed will slouch and cower—
The keep will brave an age without a rent.

What matter time or durance? Each has served the builder's aim—
And thus the crude and stately are alike:
The yokel and the nobleman will have an equal claim
When God the Judgment-balance comes to strike.

Who built the tower or cow-shed? Rumour cannot make a guess—
No record tells their story to the years;
Their names have been forgotten, with their manners and their dress,—
Their fame has faltered short of human ears.

They helped the old world forward, though, each as his duty bid,
And thus they gave their service to the race;
What if their names have perished, by the piling ages hid?
Their work advanced the land and populace.

Rear your castle; build your shed; plant your tree, or drive your nail,—
Your toil may never push you into fame;
But you have furthered progress, so your effort cannot fail,—
And He Who is your Master knows your name!

HEAR
ME,
MATE!

The use you make of things
  Decides your blight or bloom;
It lies within yourself
  To live in light or gloom.

One strings a piece of rope
  And hangs his coat to dry;
Another takes a cut
  And hangs himself thereby.

A slip of iron by you
  Is shaped a work of art;
Your comrade makes a knife
  To stab his neighbour's heart.

Jim gives his mind to vice
  And edges to the jail;
At honour Charlie aims
  And tries him at the rail.

The joke you play on Bob
  Is welcomed for its fun;
But try the same on Tom—
  He rushes for his gun.

The wolf at Jeannie's door
  Is throttled at a bound,
While Nell the cellar seeks
  And leaves him prowling round.

Make note of this, good mate,
And pass it to your wife:
The way you handle things
Decides your cast of life.

SUMMER'S FOREWORD.

Summer on the sea to-day! Sunshine come at last!
Where has Winter's temper fled?
Where has sleet its fury shed?
Storms are choking 'neath the tide;
Misty phantoms slink and hide!
Sunshine on the sea to-day! Dead is ev'ry blast!

Glamour on the sea to-day! Sun-white ships afar!
Now the ocean's anger dies!
Now the spume untilted lies!
Tides careen in ballroom grace;
Wavelets waltz in silver lace!
Sunshine on the sea to-day! Peace outwearies war!

Glory on the sea to-day! All the coast in swoon!
Ev'ry thunder-boom is spent!
Ev'ry battle-flag is rent!
Sky and shore and grot unite!
All the world is dress'd in white!
Sunshine on the sea to-day! Summer's coming soon!

"LET ME DREAM OF MY MOTHER TO-NIGHT!"

[Suggested by a passage in the early life of a British Statesman. When he was at a distant school as a boy, and felt lonesome, he added this touching petition to his evening prayer—"And please, God, let me dream of my mother to-night!"]

The leprous mist of fetid Death
Hath reft her image from my sight;
Kind God, revoke his power a while,
And let me dream of her to-night

On Fancy's deft and tranquil screen
Disclose her form by Sleepland light;
Tho' but a shade, 'twill bring me bliss
To see her in my dream to-night!

Dear eyes once warm, and now so cold—
May I behold them soft and bright!—
I'll weep to watch her gracious face
Smile on me in my dream to-night!

Confirm my faith that she shall be
Restor'd by Resurrection Might,
To die no more, nor fade at morn—
Thus let me dream of her to-night

MY ORDINARY LIFE.

The chances of my life are few
  And little from the day is won;
Yet would I flee the lounger's fate—
  Dear Master, keep me pushing on!

My every day is all alike—
  The work, the street, the shine, the mire—
But that I faithful prove at last,
  I ask Thee that I may not tire!

Too little for the world I do,
  Though want I neither wish nor will;
Lest I should miss what I might reach,
  Inspire me to keep hoping still!

I cannot boast a holy life,
  To shine for Thee with sainted glow;
Yet yearn I for a purer heart—
  Lord, save me from the mean and low!

I have not faith enough to guess
  What use my common life may be;
But may it be sincere and clean,
  And have an aim to honour Thee!

TO YOU, DEARIE!

Were I a king in wroughten sheen,
  Enthroned in grandeur's fertile art;
And did I crave a worthy queen,
  To speed my reign in throne and mart—
    I'd come for you again, dearie!

Were I a knight of lordly line,
  Enheightened by historic fame;
And did I wish a presence fine,
  To grace my house and gild my name—
    I'd come for you again, dearie!

Were I a hero big of deed,
  Enraptured with a nation's praise;
And did I lack for one to lead
  The triumph of my envied days—
    I'd come for you again, dearie!

Were I a youth of love-lorn sighs,
  Enriched with health and high control;
And did I yearn for kindly eyes,
  And fairest form and purest soul—
    I'd come for you again, dearie!

But I am neither. Better still,
  I wed you in the years away;
And every thought of heart and will
  Gains comfort in you day by day—
    So, ***here's my hand again, dearie!***

UNFALLEN EDEN.

Unpublished chimings, strayed from angels' sighs—
Tones flutt'ring out the sphere of songs unwrought—
Tremours of light reflected from no skies,
And sudden diamond-flick of shining thought;—
Blest Eden of the Mind—unfallen, pure,—
What lack I, while thy fadeless spells endure!

Quick intuitions, keen as spirits' glance—
Ripe, solemn ecstacies from dreamings deep—
Beatings of ampler life in lofty trance,
Softer and holier than a cherub's sleep;—
Pure Eden of the Mind, where all things please,—
Here may I talk with God in hourless ease!

Refreshing jets of joy from springs concealed—
Dreams tranquil as unshadowed azure calm—
Delicious pangs of riddles unrevealed,
And sunny sanctions kind as scented balm!—
Rare Eden of the Mind, no reddened blade
Flames at thy gate to bar me from thy shade!

Glad wafts of warmth from suns beyond the ken—
Quaint comedies in rougish fancies hid;—
Gushings of cleansing fun, writ by no pen,—
And spurts of merry hints that shoot unbid;—
Bright Eden of the Mind, unruined all,
Thy bliss abides, though other Edens fall

"TILL DEATH DO US PART"—AND AFTER.

(For Music.)

She—What will you do when the summer's dead,
And the sky is dark and the clouds are low?
He—I have still your eyes with their quenchless warmth
And the love-sign in their glow!

She—What will you do when the flowers are dead,
And the earth is drab and the fields are bare?
He—I have still your lips with the ruby tint
And their fruity fragrence rare!

She—What will you do when my beauty's dead,
And my form is old and my step is frail?
He—I have still your voice with its angel-tone
And the charm that cannot fail!

She—What will you do when myself am dead,
And my eyes are dim, and I speak no more?
He—I have still your soul with its deathless love
And its presence as of yore!

Together—Nor age, nor death, nor hasting years,
Can soul of mine from your soul sever;
For you are one with me my own,
To-day—till death—for ever!

JUST TO BE A BOY!

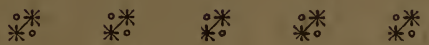
Oh, just to take the road again as when I was a boy—
When everything that happened was a creel of lark and joy!
The puppies and the kittens and the bum-bees by the way
Were sent by kindly Providence to charm a laddie's day!
Oh, the joy—
Just to be a boy!

The mill that lounged in ruins by the river's weedy strand
Was all a rare museum, or a fort, or castle grand;
And its lazy stream that stumbled through the sluice of rotten wood
Held more of spell and marvel than the walls of Holyrood!
Oh, the joy—
Just to be a boy!

The open road and linties, and the sun that shone so long—
The whistled bits of chorus and the yells of catchy song—
The burly, panting puddocks that took fright beside the ditch,
And for your entertainment dived into the muddy pitch!
Oh, the joy—
Just to be a boy!

Sure, everyone was happy-like, and everywhere was fun;
And every crust and bannock was as sweet as cake and bun;
And every stone was softer than a velvet-cushioned chair,
And life was one long ecstasy and every day a fair!
Oh, the joy—
Just to be a boy!

EACH IN HIS TURN.



Thank God, the heather-bells will blow
When I am sleeping in the hollow;
And o'er the heights new suns will glow
When I no more the hill-road follow.

And other feet will mount the slopes
When mine have ceas'd the joyous labour;
The sky will light its luring hopes
For unknown friend and new-born neighbour.

When eyes of mine are dark in dust
Young eyes will laugh with gleam and rapture;
The grace of dawn, and starlight trust,
The coming race anew will capture.

Sweep on, brave winds! Toss, cloud-filled skies!
Flash, sunlight, over stream and fountain!
Glad will I pass, that other eyes
May feast like mine on cloud and mountain!

TRUST.

No more I ask, in urgent quest,
  Where Life began, or when, or how;
I am content in faith to rest,
  And to the Greater Wisdom bow.

Man stakes a track to mazy realms,
  And deems their range within his scope;
But mystery his search o'erwhelms
  And soon outwears his bravest hope.

Say, if he trapped the secret hid,
  And knew the how, and where, and whence,
Would life secure a higher bid
  Or faith an equal recompense?

Does Knowledge always skip regret?
  Is Trust not sometimes wiser far?
The Earth we know—its dust and fret;
  But oh, the glamour of a star!

The soul reaps harvests of its own
  In mystic fields unhedged by creed;
Its finest crop of powers is grown
  Where Knowledge never cast a seed.

Some truths *must* hide their final glow,
  Else how shall God-like man aspire?—
So live we less by what we know
  Than by the faith that fans desire!

EARTH'S REGAL DAY.

(A Christmas Madrigal.)

Comes again Earth's regal day,—
When among the cattle lay
Jesus, Captain of our race,
Gentle King and crowned with grace!
Tell it, tell it, sons of men,
Round the world, and round again!

Comes again the seraph song,
Swelling o'er our strife and wrong;
Round *us* now the angels sing—
In our hearts their carols ring!
Tell it, tell it, sons of men,
Round the world, and round again!

Comes again the flashing night—
Darkness blooming into light;
Now the radiance hovers o'er
Mansion, cot, and humble door!
Tell it, tell it, sons of men,
Round the world, and round again!

THWARTED YOUTH.

And is this all, Most Merciful and Just?
A handful of frail, shaping, strenuous years
Of stern and leal apprenticeship to Life—

And now, with pow'rs exact, and hopes unleash'd,
With plans matured, ambitions temper'd true,
To be unmailed by hustling strokes of Death!
Oh, Thou August, Source of o'erteeming Life,
Wilt Thou not reck a young man's wailing heart
And flush it with one sip of earn'd delight,
Or bid him lure from out the flint of Time
One spark to cheer his long Eternity?
Thou ne'er wast young, nor ever can be old,
Thy thewless strength the heaping years defy;
But every nudge of human, pulsing hearts
Thieves somewhat from the vigour of our minds
And warps the movement of our brief-built lives.
Oh, listen, God! Let Succour gain on Law,
And Health on Pain, and Life on gagging Death!
Give back the stars I saw athwart my sky,
And coax the dark'ning fogs behind the hills!

WHEN COMES THE MIRK.

When comes the Mirk and in my face the dimming
web of mist sets home,
When Day has back'd from out the eyes which shine
its jovial radiance now,
Glide not to couch of mine with jaded sigh to say,
per rule, "Poor man,
His lights are out and passes he to dark neglect
within the grave."

But rather this:—"He was a man who friended
every law of Life,
And found a teeming joy in lavish light and wind-
careening snow;
Whose eye was tranced of hill and shore, whose ear
the lilt of birds drew in;
Who laugh'd his mirth clean out and frolick'd with
the children in the sun,
And then as gaily lock'd his eyes to know God's
wonderous law of Death."
Thus speak, if speak you must, when comes the
Mirk.

ANGEL V. DEMON.

There's an angel and a demon tucked within your
tallow hide
(If you want it put more gently—you've a good and
evil side);
You are two opposing persons, cast in gold and
earthen delf—
And the foe who fights you hardest is a fellow called
Yourself.

When the angel is the top dog, and the demon is
below,
You've a spell of saintly humour such as growlers
never know;—

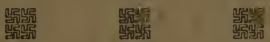
You go courting wifie o'er again and wash the sleepy cubs,
And your smile sweeps light and gracious round the dishes and the tubs.

When the demon mauls the angel and gets settled down to biz.,
Then your very blood is altered, and the curses burst and whiz;
You're as mad as any bum-bee in the spider's trapping wire,
And the chicks and puppies hook it, lest you kick them in your ire.

Now, there's one thing you must ponder (don't forget it, or you'll weep)—
You are boss of both the lodgers, and can make them wake or sleep;
You may give the demon honey, you may choke the angel's chant;
For you've got the powerful casting vote to order what you want.

You can bet your chums won't know you if you give the angel place;
They will see the sunshine oozing through your plate-of-porridge face;
And they'll mark you out a champion (with a splatch of frank surprise)
Saying, "Ain't he just a spanker! Where he comes, the jaundice flies!"

THE CHAP WHO SOWS THE CORN.



The favour of the world is blindly spent—
It leaps to him who loudest pelts the drum;
It medals one who desolates a land,
And gives another gold to bruise his chum!
It squanders presents on a powdered face,
And keeps its titles for the wealthy-born;
And so, by unenlightened caprice snared,
It overlooks the chap who sows the corn!

He buttons to his task at drowsy morn,
And strews his blessings till the hour to sup;
No cheering mob attends to spur him on,
No "special correspondent" writes him up.
Were he an actor, or a comic "star,"
Or boxer with a visage split and torn,
He would be photographed in every pose—
Whereas, he's just the chap who sows the corn!

Yet all the world is trusting to this saint,
Although he's so forgotten and obscure,—
For if he stopped—then starv'd were all the race,
Nor king nor lord nor clown could long endure.
All labour and all gaiety are closed,
All arts and laws fall fruitless and still-born,
Without the stuff that feeds the pulse of life,
And issues from the chap who sows the corn!

He's servant of the Spirit of All Good,*
  And gives his life a sacrifice for men;
His hand is but the open hand of God
  And yields more potent bliss than sword or pen.
Silent and lone would cot and palace stand
  If he to toil were not so nobly sworn;
But God engages to ensure the race
  By calling out the chap who sows the corn!

His royal stride sows glories farther flung:—
  He sows the health and peace of prince and slave—
The laughter of the children, ease of age—
  The comfort of the prophet and the knave.
No medalled tunic flushes o'er his breast—
  Instead, a homely garment, rough and worn;
Yet not so great a benefactor breathes
  As this neglected chap who sows the corn!

*"He who sows corn sows holiness."—Zoroaster.

PHANTASMAGORIA.

(After Walt Whitman.)

What impish conjuror has tapped my brain to-night,
And changed it to a weird asylum of incongruities?
What see I? Shall I tell you, chum? Well, lean-to,
  and listen.

A deserted shore—broad, lying-down sands,
With a sea out of breath.
And on the water's lip—so lonely, august, pitiful!—
A child's wrecked cradle, broken, sad;
Then a whiff of angel-children slide down the sky,
Catch it in ribbons of sunbeams, and soar singing to the sun!

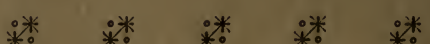
A skeleton harpist! How the mouthless thing laughs!
And as his white knuckles dash out the music
Every note assumes a shape—now a flame of fire,
And then a squirt of acid, and a lily follows;
Finishing, he lays down the harp, and lo!
It breathes, and changes to a bed of roses!

See yon golf-course. Watch those antic, freaky players!
They burst to sparks of fire at each joint.
One plays with a radiant Koh-i-noor for a ball,
And as he drives, behold! an archway spilling hues
That make the very sunlight drab!

Across the tide my spirit skims
And sees a fishing boat amid a dark sky and darker sea;
Figures in the den; slouching, sleepy—some in bunks;
A clouded lantern swings to the roof
And answers to the sea's jangle;
And a shaggy fisherman propped on a kit,
Plays a melodeon with sweaty face intent.

Here I stand on a bridge, spanning a quiet river.
Night! Darkness dismisses the land.
Lo! White specks in the dark float down the stream—
Paper boats—baby boats—dancing towards me!
And as they approach they ignite,
And flame out in white, blue, red, purple, yellow,
Each a separate colour,
And disappear beneath the bridge!
These are my thoughts—that take shape from the dark,
Blaze a while, and die on their way
To the Sea!

THE LAST COURAGE.



God, hear me now, and hear me sure!
I have a prayer for my last hour.
'Tis this:—

When my heart staggers to its final clutch,
And breathing-time is brief, and I must go,
Cause me to think of ***her!***
She has been more than soul or mind to me!
More pure, more steadfast than the light itself
Have been the tenders to my heart of her ripe eyes.

So, when I near the cleaving Verge
That ends the land of Time, and cuts
Sheer into seas Eternal and unmapped—
When the last foot-catch of the Known I reach,
And then must trust the flouting tides
That lap the dreaded Void and bear
The soul escaped to silent, chartless coasts—
O, grant me, God, one calm and painless blink
To call before my soul those queenly eyes.
And then, and then, blindfold me if Thou wilt,
And tear the slender sinews of my heart
With scar or thrust, or hawkish death,
I shall defy it and outlaugh it all!
There is no fear that I shall fear,
Nor dread that I shall dread,
Nor death that I can die,
If her soft glance but lamp my soul once more
And hero me with courage born of love!

ONCE AGAIN!

(After the Holidays).

I've heard again the skylark sing
  Athwart the morning cloud,
And blissful stood beneath his wing
  With pulses thrumming loud!

I've trod again the healing hills
  Atop the moorlands wide,
And strayed adown the soothing rills
  That through the mosses glide!

I've seen again the sea-gulls wheel
  Ayont the rocks of grey,
And gladsome watch'd their buoyant reel
  Amid the billows' spray!

I've stood again with bounding heart
  Aneath my father's roof,
And felt the fret of life depart
  Before its calm reproof!

I've knelt again with straining breast
  Anear a quiet mound;
And crooned the names of those who rest
  Within the holy ground!

* * * * * * * *

Now, dusty street for heathy sod;
  For sky, the city stain;
But, sacred sights of home—thank God,
  I've seen ye once again!

A HOLIDAY HYMN.

(At the Sea-Side).

Oh, wondrous King of Shore and Sky,
I worship Thee this summer morn!
By wave beneath and cloudlet high
Speak to my spirit, spent and worn;
Let wafts of pausing breezes bring
To my chafed senses sight and cure,—
And on the sea-gull's panting wing
Uplift my soul to regions pure!

Like yon deep sea of changing glooms,
My life envelops hidden grief—
Wreck'd hopes that lie in sunken tombs,
And friendships drown'd by scar and reef;
Yet let Thy glance break over me,
In sunshine of approving love,
And my dark life shall radiant be
With light that comes from Heav'n above!

Hid from the search of keenest eyes—
Where only darts of daylight come—
A world of tangled mystery lies
And deeps where baffled storms find home;
Yet here a lovelier scene may blow
Of rarer frond in richer sod;
And these dim caves of life may show
The choicer miracles of God!

BLOOD OF MY YOUTH!

While sight is mine, though blear and shot,
And sentient life is still my lot,—
Though sense and thought and passion clot,
Blood of my youth,
Forsake me not!

If I should know the needs of men,
Yet shut their sorrows from my ken
And skulk a shirker in my den,—
Blood of my youth,
Rebuke me then!

While Error struts with potent frown
And sneers the voice of Knowledge down,
And Freedom lacks her lawful crown,—
Blood of my youth,
My weakness drown!

When years defeat my eager brain,
And thought is blunt with age and strain,
And strength must yield its flag to pain,—
Blood of my youth,
My hope maintain!

Should swooning nature, past control,
Decline to monkish creed and scroll,
And shy at Wisdom's sterner role,—
Blood of my youth,
Redeem my soul!

THE VASTER TRUTH.

High Sov'reign of the Vaster Truth,
  Thy potent Mind no chaos knows:
Thy changeless Age gulfs mortal Youth,
  Thy tide of Might unresting flows.

Great King of Empires Unrevealed
  Whose marches touch our distant skies,—
Lord of The Whole, no mote concealed
  Eludes thy ken in dip or rise.

No idol of a tribe art Thou,
  But God of worlds and suns and realms;
No parchment scroll unseals Thy Vow,
  No wrecking host Thy Plan o'erwhelms.

Thy mighty Secret is Thine own—
  No angel mind can probe Thy Fact;
Man's proudest quest Thou hast o'erthrown—
  He can but watch Thy wid'ning Act.

We may not know, we cannot guess,
  How vast Thy high Design must be:
But, bid our quest'ning souls possess
  The nobler gift of Trust in Thee!

I SHALL REMEMBER!

While flaring worlds are lit and spun;
And larks play envoy to the sun;
And streams and rivers seaward run;—
I shall remember!
My Homeland—I shall not forget!

While dawn unbeds the sleeping day;
And Spring revokes the Winter's sway;
And workers toil and children play;—
I shall remember!
My Birthland—I shall not forget!

While breezes ride by crag and hill;
And healthy wheats their vestures fill;
And roof remains on kirk and mill;—
I shall remember!
My Boyland—I shall not forget!

While Summer braids the clouds with gold;
And youth its argent hopes unfold;
And life, and mind, and being hold;—
I shall remember!
My Kinland—I shall not forget!

Printed by D. MacLeod, Ltd., Kirkintilloch.